

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Islands in the Sun

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12 (class talk/debate)

Objectives: The student will:

- Take a side in the territorial expansion/imperialism question
- Find and use quotes from the actual 1899 Senate debate on the Treaty of Paris
- Develop an amendment to the treaty to prevent future crises
- Use research to gain information for roles to play

Time: 2 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1898** *Treaty of Paris Between the United States and Spain*
1901 *Platt Amendment*

Resources: *Quotations from the Leaders of Congress*

Materials: One legal-size envelope for each student

Internet Access to research similar amendments to see how they are constructed, such as:

- By Jefferson Davis to the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo
- Teller Amendment
- Test Ban Treaty Amendments
- Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- http://www.ourdocuments.gov/document_data/pdf/Our_Documents_Sourcebook.pdf
- <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/spanishwar/>
- http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/sawhtml/movies_of_Sp.Am_WAr

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

President McKinley sent five influential politicians to Paris to negotiate a peace treaty with Spain. Three were Senators, another was the editor of the *New York Tribune*, and the third was Secretary of State W.R. Day. The conference lasted just over two months (Oct. 1–Dec. 10, 1898) to iron out the problems of Cuba and the Philippines.

When the Senate received the treaty for ratification, it met with intense opposition. Many New England Republicans even joined the Democrats to prevent the United States from becoming an imperial power and repudiating the principle of non-entanglement. Their opponents—advocates of a strong America—wanted to embrace the destiny of the United States as a world power. This marked the first great departure from America's traditional foreign policy.

In this lesson, students will be assigned to different sides of the question and will debate the treaty just as the Senate did in February 1899. They will also propose amendments to the treaty which might have prevented future conflicts.

Pre-Lesson:

Have one envelope for each student. On one-third of the envelopes write the letter "I" in the far left lower corner. On another third, write the letter "A" in the far left lower corner. On the remaining third, write the letter "N." (I= imperialist; A=anti-imperialist and N=neutral)

In the envelopes of the I group and the A group, cut out the quotes from the Resource, *Quotations from the Leaders of Congress*, and put randomly in the correct point-of-view envelopes; leave the "N" envelopes empty. Put the envelopes in a box for students to make random choices.

Day One: Research:

- 1.** Ask students to research the February 1899 debate in the Senate on the Treaty of Paris, and look particularly for quotes that they can use in a debate on either side of the issue of imperialism. (20–30 minutes)
- 2.** Ask students to take notes on this information and to also find samples of amendments made to various international treaties through the years. (They will use this information later while writing their own amendments.)
- 3.** At the end of the research period, have students choose a sealed envelope from the box of envelopes. The letter marked on the outside indicates which side they will take in the next class period debate of imperialists vs. anti-imperialists.
- 4.** Have the students form three groups, based on their envelope selection.

5. They can now compare notes on what *ideas* and *ideals* they will present in the upcoming debate. Those on the neutral side must research both sides of the question so that they can pose questions during the debate. Everyone will have a role. The students with quotations in their envelopes will be expected to use those quotes in the debate.

6. Give students the two documents, *The Treaty of Paris* and the *Platt Amendment*. Allow the remainder of the class for students to read and take notes pertaining to their side of the debate. Encourage all sides to use selections from the documents in their arguments or refer to certain ideas and policies set forth in the documents.

7. Encourage them to gather additional information, as needed for the debate, as homework.

Day Two: Debate: Anti-Imperialist vs. Imperialist.

1. While calling/checking the roll, the teacher should make a note as to the position the student is taking in the debate. Everyone should hear each student either say either: imperialist, anti-imperialist, or neutral.

2. The teacher should call this session of the U.S. Senate to order and form a speaker's list on the board. Have each speaker either come to the front of the room or stand by his/her desk while making key arguments. (The teacher may offer students check marks for each time they speak; ask each student to participate at least three times. The method of acknowledging participation is at teacher's discretion.) Allow the debate to continue as long as students are presenting solid ideas.

3. Ask students to take out their envelopes from yesterday and on the back indicate with either an I, or an A, which side won the debate. The neutrals votes will be key in this part of the lesson because everyone must choose a side—*no one can remain neutral*.

4. Remind students that this Senate was one of the most heated during this era. The vote was 57 (for) and 27 (against.) More troubles were to come from the islands addressed in the treaty.

5. In the final part of the lesson, ask each student to look at the Platt Amendment and write a short amendment to the treaty that they think would prevent any future problems for the United States in this region. Put the name of the writer on the envelope as well as on the amendment. Have students place their amendments inside the envelopes and collect them.

6. The teacher can quickly count the votes on the back of the envelopes and announce the outcome of their ratification debate to the class.

7. Save the amendments for a further day of debate or use a few good ones on a local test asking for student responses.

Extension Activities:

1. If available, view the PBS movie, *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War*, which contains numerous interviews with historians, scholars, and experts on the Spanish-American War. Using the interview list, you can click on a name and download a transcript of the filmed interviews in Microsoft Word format.

http://www.pbs.org/crucible/frames/_resources.html

2. Use the interview with Louis A. Perez or any of the other scholars noted in the film to review or gather background information on this time period. ■